Volume One, Number Six Winter 1990

A Free Paperzine For Wimmin of Color

Literary Xpress

Photo by Roland L. Freeman

SWEET HONEY IN THE ROCK

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LITERARY XPRESS
Volume One, Number 6

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The Literary Exchange

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LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Here we are at a decade's end. It is a time of active reflection on past events, as well as a time of contemplation of new things to come. In addition, it is a time for deep appreciation for the many blessings (some obvious, some veiled) that have been bestowed upon us.

As with all on the planet, but certainly as wimmin of color, we have met our companions in life: adversity, conflict, and change, seemingly at every turn.

Thankfully, the end result of these encounters, gives rise to the opportunity to overcome those psychic, physical, and spiritual barriers that have greeted us.

We bid farewell to old thinking and bad habits, and pray that Mother/Father God imbues us with fresh ideas and plenty of room for improvement so that we may move forward.

Our mothers and sisters before us have used their sweat to polish their souls, (you know them well, Sojourner, Ida B., Nefertiti, as well as our own co-founder, Sharron). We have inherited that same quality that gives us the impetus to work, to organize, to work, to publish, to raise our families, to work, to strive, to attend meeting after meeting, and to grow.

Even as this missive takes form the frightening realities blare from the TV and news media --"Black youth shot" "Hispanic male seized in raid" "Who's Winning the War on Drugs," "The AIDS Crisis."

We must trust that there are brothers and sisters who daily meet these challenges. More importantly, we need to support them and each other in these struggles because we provide the balance to the big picture.

The wimmin of LE look forward to the new year with the confidence borne out of meeting challenges head on.

We thank all of our sisters and brothers who have stood with us in support.

Together, we shall win.

Be well in spirit,

Donna Weems
President
Literary Exchange

Margaret Walker

Climbing The Totem Pole: A Personal Interview

By Rhonda M. Kendall

If Margaret Walker had waited for African American women to be recognized for our literary contributions, she would not be the legendary poet she is today.

Margaret Walker was born in Birmingham Alabama in 1915. She recalls writing her first unpublished poem, *"Picture to Yourself a Band of Pilgrims"* at age ten. Poems she wrote between the ages eleven to fourteen are published in her current collection, This is My Century: New and Collected Poems: University of Georgia Press. She received her pre-collegiate education in different parts of the segregated south where she found it easy to maintain an A average with little effort. She began studying at Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois at age seventeen. About her stay at Northwestern she says, "When I went to Northwestern I found it a little harder. Because I had been making A's down south I was shocked when I asked the teachers at Northwestern for my grades they would say 'your grade is C' without ever looking in a record book. All black people got the gentleman's C. When I came to Chicago I was shocked to discover that the average black person I met in Chicago and Evanston assumed that education was finished after you graduated high school. When I went to school in the south everybody went to school. The black colleges were full of black people. My first year at Northwestern there were 11,000 students but only 40 of them were black. When I asked why there were not more black people in school the answer was one, no money and two, the first semester they always threw the black people out." In spite of that she graduated Northwestern University in 1935 during the depression.

Sadly Ms. Walker did not receive much support from the African American community. Most of her peers were skeptical. They did not think she could get published. She says, "Growing up in the deep south as a young black girl or woman it is considered ludicrous to say you were going to grow up and write and publish books. Black people don't do that." When she was a young girl her father thought her writing was only a puberty urge and not a mark of genius. Her father later realized she was gifted and serious. Both her parents were highly supportive and inspirational. Her husband, Firnist Alexander, encouraged her to do everything she wanted to do. I asked if pursuing her writing career had any negative effect on the development of her family and she quoted her husband, "Not a damn bit."

She has rubbed elbows with many of the African American literati of her time. These encounters include long term friendships with Margaret Burroughs, Gwendolyn Brooks, and the late Margaret Danner. W. E. B. Du Bois was one of her greatest inspirations and even published her poetry for the first time in *Crisis* magazine. She held a friendship with Richard Wright for approximately 3 1/2 years. To dispel any untrue stories about their involvement she said, "It was a wonderful friendship. Very unusual and very rare. But it was a literary, intellectual, political and platonic friendship." In her book *Demonic Genius* , she explains the importance of Richard Wright as a black man in the twentieth century. For thirty five years she and Langston Hughes were close friends. He was inspirational and encouraging though she recalls a statement he made when she started her family. "Every baby you have is a book you won't write." Whether he was right or wrong does not really matter because she gave birth to four children and eleven books and is still writing.

At the time of this interview Ms. Walker was on a two month speaking tour. She is experiencing a rather serious form of arthritis which makes her afraid she will "topple over" during a public reading. After fourty-seven years of traveling from one speaking engagement to another she is ready to stop and work at home in Jackson Mississippi on her computer and complete the half dozen or so writing projects waiting for her return.

When I was ten years old I read her novel *Jubilee* thirty years after she began writing it. It was the first book I read by a woman of color, *my* color. I had an overwhelming excitement for the quality of her work and at having a positive black female image in the literary arena to behold and identify with. I knew of the difficulties black women must confront to be considered professional writers, so I wanted an opportunity to some day personally ask Margaret Walker why she writes. From the preface in *This is My Century* I got my first answer. "If I worried about what the critics say I would stop trying to write, to practice the craft and art of writing. As long as I live I shall keep trying. Why? Because I must." On September 24, 1989 at Guild Books on Chicago's north side I listened to Ms. Walker recite her signature poem, *"For My People"*. Hearing this brilliant work in Margaret Walkers own voice filled me with the same sense of excitement I felt when I was ten. Afterward she honored the Literary Exchange by granting me the privilege of interviewing her. My question was answered in person and in detail. "I think that women have had a most difficult time. In this society it is hard to get published. If you were a white male it would not be easy

but it would be easier for a white male than for a white female. That white female has it much easier than a black male but that black male can get published before a black female. In this society the role that we've had historically is the domestic, the beast of burden, the mule. We have all the stereotypes about the prostitute, the whore, the puritanical boss, the nagging wife, and the impossible dominating mother. We are the lowest on the totem pole. Since before slavery black women have somehow managed to speak and be heard. From Harriet Tubman and Sojourner Truth to now. I believe you are born with a talent but you have to cultivate any talent you have. All my life I saw myself writing. I have visualized everything I ever wanted to do and be. I see the books I have not written as the ones I intend to write. If you have the desire to do something good or worthy you will find a way to do it. I write because of an urging compulsion."

I hope this article along with the love and appreciation of today's women of color in some way help prevent Ms. Walker from toppling over. I am grateful to Guild Books for the opportunity to conduct the interview. Thank you Margaret for climbing the totem pole and leaving footholds behind.

Chicago

it's not really how (i)
pictured it,
so hostile, weary, yet free—
my home (i)
only long for...
serenity and life;
unclean nostrils and minds
as well, smogged breath
taken in
the whole (self),
somehow (i) facied
her vitality, not segregated
dreams sordidly
erupting
unyielded,
unmastered,
undesired...
while stolen acids filter the brain,
craven entities are brute;
all humility,
(i) examined/
and
(i) knew.

lisa jacqueline gillard
Chicago, Illinois

Streetwise

Man standing bowed
in the doorway of winter
shivering through
the year's coldest night.
Trembling grey hand
at his raspy sounding throat
clutches vainly at his mulegrey coat.

Ask him,
I dare you,
cold enough tonight?

He won't seem to notice
the frost in his beard
as staring slightly past you
like he didn't quite hear.
With a voice that's Jesus gentle
his words sound smooth and slick.
He'll answer
smiling vaguely,
and who holds the wind?

I do he'll chuckle
I do my friend.
It sure ain't no secret
I hold the wind.
Got it right here
in the palm of my hand
just me in the darkness
with this cold ass wind.

Denise Powell
Chicago, Illinois

20 April 86

I dreamt in Chinese last nite. I was in
a Chinatown setting. Ngaw won ngaw pung yow.
Ngaw mun de jung gwok yun.*
They responded.
I re-member waking and
knowing I had dreamt in Chinese.

Lola Lai Jong
Chicago, Illinois

* I look for my friends.
I ask the Chinese people.
(Cantonese dialect of China)

Health Line

By Melba Poole

Winter is just around the corner and all complexion types need revitalizing because, in the winter, there are so many factors that can dry your skin. Harsh winds, chilling temperatures, and indoor heating are just a few of the things that contribute to the abuse that your skin is subject to.

On those really dry days, or days when you are feeling depressed and may be suffering from cabin fever, treat yourself to one of my "Come Alive Again" at home facials.

I have found the following two mixtures have helped keep my face smooth, soft and glowing:

1) Start by cleansing your face in your regular fashion; take one quarter (1/4) avocado, one half (1/2) ripe banana, two (2) tablespoons of plain yogurt, and one (1) or two (2) teaspoons of wheat germ oil. Blend this mixture well, spread generously on your face and leave it on for ten (10) minutes, then rinse with warm water. You may use this method up to twice a week.
(2) Cleanse your face in your regular fashion; put the white of one (1) egg with two (2) tablespoons of sugar or honey, beat these ingredients vigorously until stiff, apply to your face and leave it on for twenty minutes. Wash off first with cold water and then hot water. Follow up this treatment by applying your favorite face cream.

It is good advice never to place facial products directly under your eyes.

To complete your beauty treatment, you can bathe yourself into a beautiful body!

Silky skin is more seductive than satin sheets. Here are two of my beauty recipes that may help to revitalize normal skin and soften oily skin as you soak in your bath:

Glowing Skin Bath and Scrub

Bathing in salted water adds glow and sheen to your skin because the salt sloughs off dead cells, thus improving the skin texture. To take a salt bath, use one quarter (1/4) cup of epson salts, one (1) handful of coarse salt, and one (1) square of cotton cloth. Fill the cloth with the coarse salt, tie it up to make a scrub like the "Loff" scrub, and then fill your tub halfway with warm water. Pour in the epsom salts and fill the tub the rest of the way. When you get into the tub, gently rub the salt scrub once or twice over your body, avoiding the genital area and your breasts. Soak for about fifteen (15) minutes. Drain the tub and quickly shower to rinse the salt from your body. Your skin will feel much better. Now, go to bed and sleep well!

If your skin can't tolerate the salt bath, here is another recipe you may want to try;

Healthy Milk Bath

Bathing your skin in milk is like enveloping yourself in a protein solution. To take a milk bath, fill the tub halfway with warm water and add the following ingredients: One (1) cup of powdered milk; one half (1/2) cup of sesame oil. Finish filling the tub while stirring the water to make sure the oil and milk are well mixed. If your skin is really dry, you may also add three (3) tablespoons of apple cider vinegar. It works wonders to relieve itching and flaking. Immerse yourself and enjoy the luxury of your bath for about twenty (20) minutes. When you are finished, pat yourself dry and admire your soft skin.

TERMS WITH PAST THINGS

Momma is small and ochre

keeps her home dark

to hide the shame

in dusty judgements

swirling mad in sunlight

accusing the highly polished wood

scrubs her children pure

as chancel and nave

tended by solemn elders.

I remember her fingers

twirling a hundred curlers

into freshly-pressed hair,

rubbing shine into cheeks,

fingering parts between braids

pulled stiff with peach bergamot

"and this little piggie"

cried... on for hours

just to see me laugh.

Terri L. Jewell

Lansing, Michigan

"BLACKOLOGY"

.... the study of being born Black.

At five years old I questioned why I was born into this family, economic status, environment and Black. At 5 years old I sensed something was not correct in my perception of this picture called life and the explanations given only heightened my frustration.

During my teens I had an opportunity to meet an old wise Black man. He told me, "There are laws which should not be broken. These are not man made laws but are universal laws. If these are broken you will suffer the consequences because one cannot escape the universe." I asked," What are these laws?" He responded, "One is the law of gravity. If you go to the top of this building and jump out of ignorance or stupidity of the law you will fall and get hurt." We talked further about other laws but my limited life experience restricted much comprehension beyond the "leaping off the building" which I knew was the truth.

Later in my early twenties I encountered an Eastern philosophy. I was fascinated by the concepts of reincarnation and karma. In case you are not familiar with these concepts, reincarnation states that life is eternal which includes your own life which continues to be reborn again and again. Karma is an accumulation of all previous causes made since the infinite past which we carry with us from lifetime to lifetime. Birth and death is likened to waking and sleeping. For example, upon awakening this morning we were the same individuals as we were yesterday. Birth is the awakening from a previous lifetime. This theory on an instinctual level made sense. And this concept was not in direct conflict with my Christian background; karma simply identifies 'heaven' and 'hell' as a place whenever and wherever you exist depending on the causes you have created. Some aspects of our lives are closer to heaven some are closer to hell. This was big pill to swallow because it reeked of responsibility but swallow it I did which led to the beginning of a healing process with my soul.

Also during this time I returned to college. One course I particularly valued was my African-American History course taught by one of the most brilliant Black men I have ever met, Dr. Jim Heard. Our first undertaking was confronting the subliminal messages we have learned which served to turn us against ourselves. Next we studied the history of our African ancestors. I learned about the 'real Egyptians.' I learned upon the walls in the tombs of the Pharaohs and Kings are pictures of the position of all the planets in our solar system at the time of that individual's death. There were landing strips and the pyramids which have yet to be comprehended. Such was the knowledge possessed by my people thousands of years before Columbus ventured out to discover if this planet was flat or round. Great effort was expended to disguise our true history and achievements. Some examples were the disfigurement of statues and sphinx by breaking off their round noses and confiscating thousands of books and artifacts to satisfy the invaders thirst for knowledge, power and control.

The knowledge I received from this course was emancipating. I realized that African people had employed advanced knowledge to build governments, universities and advanced scientific systems, therefore what had gone wrong. Especially since that time African people have experienced worldwide oppression and deprivation. Walking along 63rd street, on the south side of Chicago, was like experiencing the opposite spectrum of existence we once knew. We definitely violated some of those "laws which should not be broken without paying a severe price." Some may state that other cultures have done so as well and upon closer examination they too suffer their effects and the full ramifiactions have yet to come for others. However, all life began in African, therefore, our burden is heaviest since we started the 'mess.' The spiritual aspect of my life identifies arrogance and the overtaking of our inner 'devil' which draws to it that which is evil and destructive. In other words, demise initially started within our lives and eventually the external world confirmed our reality not the illusion we wanted to continue to live.

Not surprisingly, whenever I have shared these realizations with my people, I have been ridiculed, scorned and verbally abused. I have been told over and over again that I had it all wrong because it has always been the 'white man's fault.' But I have also felt encouraged as I have watched these ideas be implanted and individuals are able to move beyond blaming others and begin to take a glimpse at themselves as their primary problem. For far too long our lives have been removed from our previous level of consciousness and we continue grasping greedily at partial truths which have kept us enslaved and blind. Partial truths make us refuse to accept responsibility for our lives and encourages fear of truly tapping into the 'God' within and manifesting the wisdom and power to alter our destinies, hence my motivation for writing this article because we must grow up and we must encourage each other to do so.

As we celebrate Black History Month hopefully African-American people will realize that the great knowledge we had access to is not lost but covered with ignorance, avarice and stupidity.

In conclusion, we have been traveling down a path by which we have emulated and fought for acceptance by a group of people we say are our 'enemies," if this is so who is charting your course?

Audrey Warren
Chicago, Illinois

Abortion: Pro-Life, Pro-Choice or *Informed Choice*

by Yaounde Olu

ASTROPOINT

The abortion issue is one that has touched almost every household in one way or another with people sharply divided along pro-choice, pro-life lines. A lot of political careers are being determined by who lines up with whom and race, class or sex do not automatically translate into one stance or the other. There are no clear lines of demarkation based on preconceived notions. The fabric of Western society stands to be torn apart by this futile controversy. And it is futile at this time.

The abortion question is significant because it represents a point of no return, a "ring-pass-me-not". This issue is a taskmaster whose main edict states, "You can go no further in understanding abortion until you experience a major shift in your current understanding of life and death. You can go no further until you are able to peek behind the veil of Isis to examine the principles of pre-life and rebirth."

The current Western notion of life is that it either starts at conception or at birth. One enters the twilight zone, or worse, if one begins to discuss *existence before conception*. Here lies the crux of the abortion dilemma.

There are more people in the world who believe in reincarnation or rebirth than those who do not. And more Westerners would probably have a more realistic viewpoint of this matter if most references to reincarnation had not been edited out of the Bible in 553 A.D. during the second Council of Constantinople. Tabula Rasa, the concept that children are born innocent and with a clean slate that becomes filled as life is experienced, well misses the mark. We do not begin life with a clean slate--we bring with us, at birth, a record of all that we have done and been. This message is coded genetically, astrologically, in the environment to which we are born and in the people and circumstances we meet. This gives renewed meaning to the Christian doctrine of 'born into sin'.

Abortion, when viewed in the light of rebirth, becomes a whole new ballgame. If it is true that we reap what we sow and are born to circumstances that, through necessity, fulfill the requirements of cause and effect, and we most surely are, then the Golden Rule is a mandate for successful living. Perhaps if, as women, we exercise our "choice" to control our bodies after we have allowed the seed of life to take root, it might be that we are somehow cutting short our own future lives or cutting short our own creative expression. It is interesting to note that, in astrology, the house of children is the same house that governs all creative expression. In essence, our children are our creations. If we abort our children, we may expect that other personal efforts may possibly be aborted. An astrologer can examine the fifth house and its aspects to see in which area(s) of life creative expression may be thwarted.

With this thought in mind, it becomes apparent that there is a need to exercise "informed choice" as opposed to blind pro-choice. And whatever we do is automatically pro-life since it is impossible to ultimately destroy life in the long run. This is not to say that women should not have control over their bodies or that they should give control of their bodies to men. What it might entail is that women should take greater control over their bodies *before pregnancy occurs when the greatest control is needed.* This is clearly the best choice.

The control issue is one of the main reasons abortion is such a hot issue. However unfortunate, women have had to use abortion as leverage in the women's rights struggle. The fact is that none but the most backward men will deny women the right to determine their own destinies. To do so causes a backlash that affects their own lives. Quiet as its kept, the oppression of women by men has already resulted in the squashing of the feminine principle, Love, in the palaces of power. The result is the current materialistic thrust that allows drugs and other societal ills to proliferate. The demise of the family is directly diagnostic of the absence of the love principle.

It can be said that all viewpoints coexist in every 'now' of time. Even during Columbus' time when many people thought the world was flat there were those who knew it was round. And today in twentieth century America there exists a Flat Earth Society. At any given point in time, there are people who represent every belief system. The general tone of a society depends upon the number of people who hold a common viewpoint. When the dominant belief systems change,society experiences 'evolution' (or devolution). The abortion issue brings us to the crossroads of evolution. A formidable wall of propaganda is placed in front of people which causes them to turn a deaf ear to certain self-evident truths. Reincarnation is one of these truths that explains, better than any other current theory, life's inequities.

The sleeping prophet of Virginia Beach, Edgar Cayce, who could be called a trance channeler, in retrospect, was once asked what message an aborted child had for its reluctant mother-to-be. The child responded "Tell her I'll be back." Women today who consider abortion should probably take heed.

Kids Picks

Chitty Chitty Bang Bang
by Ian Fleming
Publisher: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc.

Mrs. Frisby and the Rats of NIMH
by Robert C. O'Brien
Publisher: Macmillan Publishing Co.

The Cricket in Times Square
by George Selden
Publisher: Simultaneously in Canada

The Ghost in the Noonday Sun
by Sid Fleirschman
Publisher: Little, Brown

The Dove Dove
by Marvin Terban
Publisher: Ticker and Fields

Folk Tales from the Soviet
by Kazakhstan
Publisher: Raduga Moscow

Books Recommended by:
Camille Williamson
Chicago, Illinois
Age 9

MOONLIGHT

What makes the night so bright?
Yes of course, it is moonlight.
Every morning you wake up
moonlight will be gone, but
sunshine takes over
and turns the night to dawn.
Moonlight is so glittering bright
it helps me stay asleep at night.

Camille Edwards
Chicago, Illinois
Age 9

Congratulations!!!

1989 Essay Contest Winners

We received numerous essays written by students from several schools. This contest is one of the Literary Exchange's community programs intended to encourage young people in the literary process.

The essay title, "What's So Good About My Life," was intended to generate high self-esteem and a sense of self worth.

Our winners were, Tiffany Brewer, Mendell Davis, Timnesha Evans, Shawntek Howard, Franklin Jackson, Michael Jackson, Jerel Matthews, David Pryor, Camille Williamson and LaSahawn Winston. All were treated to an afternoon at the ETA Creative Arts Foundation, 7558 South Chicago Avenue for a stellar performance of the family musical "A Place To Be Me."

We sincerely thank all those students that submitted an essay and we look forward to even greater participation in the next year's contest.

Maua Henderson
Stephanie Stephens
Contest Coordinators

Helpless

As helpless as a kitten up a tree
helplessness that no one else can see.
We rightfully have freedom like everyone else
But no one seems to care and we're put in the back
of a shell.
Our inequality seems like sorry faces
But they don't see we can't go in certain places.
Living lives with sorrow and despair
But it doesn't matter, 'cause no one cares.
There is no solution for the problem we have here,
Soon a whole race will just disappear.

Lee Andra Watts
Chicago, Illinois
Age 13

Freedom Wishin'

Free me Jesus
free me from this man
he done tried to beat my butt again
he got up from the bed
to hit me
I ran from him
and hit somethin'
on my eye.
he swared it wasn't him,
but I don't believe him.

Free me Jesus from this man
He hemmed me in the kitchen
I caught hold of a fryin pan
full of grease
that I slung over
to the kitchen door to stop
them hands layin' on me

Free me Jesus from this man.
He came in the door
drunk again
I closed my eyes thinkin'
he'd sho'ly think I was sleep
Now, he sit on the bed
whisperin' my name
and shakin' me, askin' me
was I sleep

Lord Jesus save me
from this man
He done hemmed me in the bathroom
since I called the police
but before they came,
I hit him in the head
and poured ammonia all on him --
had to keep him away
Then when the police came
he was sleep
with a knife stuck
in the head of the bed.

Jesus save me from this man

Diann W. Robinson
Chicago, Illinois

Meditation

On a bus that stops at midnight--
is the journey
longer than the ride?

Denise Powell
Chicago, Illinois

Little Girl

Praying
to unveil true self.
Body heat
accelerating,
circulating,
tears suddenly
gushing,
overflowing,
vision veiled,
while peering through a window
of an unknown place.

Desolate room,
child - resting,
seated, leaning over,
elbows weighing heavily
on knees,
head hanging,
shoulders hunched tightly,
ready,
to defend - herself,
against the world.

As I embrace her misery,
my torso begins to jerk
spasmodically,
arms criss-cross,
hands grip forearms,
restraining, soothing,
copious hoards, of agony.

Extending unconditional love
an unacquainted gift for her,
is held at a doubtful distance.
Her disbelieving eyes,
probing, questioning,
this attentiveness.

Gradual recognition,
through humbling pain.
My shivering lips
submissively utter,
"Thank you.....
thank you,
my enduring,
solitary life partner.
Retire."
Face upturned,
visibly, fatigue is
allowed to encircle
her rigid frame,
which illluminates
gratitude.

Solemnly I commit
to her, mercy,
devotion and attention,
as I tenderly reclined her.
Thank you Audree.

Audree Warren
Chicago, Illinois

Born Black

Born Black!
Proud!
Intelligent!
ready to conquer all, who
try to hurt
me.
Slowing down their anxieties
with only one source,
prayer.

lisa jacqueline gillard
Chicago, Illinois

WIMMIN ON THE MOVE

Congratulations! Congratulations!

Sharron Matthews has been awarded a well deserved position with the State of Illinois. She is one of our founding members and has diligently served the Literary Exchange, Inc. since its beginning. We are very proud and happy for her as she pursues her career goals. We wish her the best of blessings in her new pursuits. PERSEVERE ON SHARRON!

Congratulations to the new officers of LE. The Literary Exchange held elections in October 1989 and the following individuals were elected to office.

Donna Weems	President
Yaounde Olu	Vice-President
Saundra Langford	Secretary
C. Maua Henderson	Treasurer

BEST OF SUCCESS IN YOUR NEW POSITIONS. WORK ON WIMMIN!

Twila (Toni) Hayes, one of our active members was honored and awarded a Human Rights Award for her work and contributions in the labor struggle by the alliance against political and racist repression. ACTIVATE ON TONI!

Good luck to **Audrey Warren** in her new pursuit. She is one of our hard-working core members who has reentered school at Northwestern University. Audrey has worked untiringly as the Xpress Advertising Manager and on many other committees within LE. We know as she grows - so will LE. EXPAND ON AUDREY!

Congratulations to **Shari Mannery**, one of our Associate members and a feature writer of the Xpress. Shari recently graduated, with high honors, from Columbia College. She is going on to acquire her M.A. in Journalism, with a full Fellowship from Columbia. PRESS ON SHARI!

Accolades to **Euzhan Palcy**! She is the first Black woman to direct a major studio film, *A Dry White Season*. She was born in Fort-de-France Martinque, Euzhan.

*** Are accolades due to someone you know? Is there someone you know who is making significant waves in their lives or for others?

Send your highlight information to:
The Literary Xpress
8004 South Phillips Ave.
Chicago, Illinois 60649

sapphire/i guess

funky thing
i'd be flowers
and sweat
perfume and piss
manufactured and
real i'd be a sweet
thing open
wide to your need
a bowl a river
to flow fill
i'd be black ink
grey fears
midnight madness
and if i was a jewel
i'd be a Rubylee Pearl Sapphire Opal
Crystal girl and
if i was a machine
i'd break down
decompose and
go back to the
earth
"i'd never stop"
loving you
i'd never stop
loving you
i say i say I SAY
i'd never stop
loving you.

Sapphire
Harlem, New York

Literary Exchange, Inc. is a not-for-profit corporation formed in July of 1985 out of a need to heighten the visibility of wimmin of color in literature, thereby, improving her status in society. To that end, the Literary Exchange, Inc., is a collective of wimmin of color from all walks of life committed to the social, political, and economic empowerment of wimmin of color, utilizing the myriad aspects of literature as a vehicle. The Literary Xpress, a Literary Exchange publication, is designed to provide a forum for wimmin and children of color.

Stress: and A Womans' Place

Tia Bowen

A helpmeet, according to Webster, means helpmate and is defined as (1) helper or partner; (2) wife. In order to fit into either of these categories a helpmeet would need the same equipment and qualifications as the person to be helped, therefore God created the helpmate with equal equipment, but unique in that he or she could approach a problem from different views and still come to a workable solution. Also, he decided that the woman would be the bearer of the children. We all know that child-bearing and rearing are stressful but rewarding conditions, so the Lord in his wisdom, provided women with a higher tolerance for stress. Eve's first test while she was in the Garden of Eden, was when one son killed the other. But she was able to adjust because she knew God.

Furthermore, the Bible tells us in **Prov. 31: 10-28**, that a virtuous woman is priced far higher than rubies. It continues by pointing out the things this type of woman will do, such as work willingly with her hands, feed her family and servants, plant and tend a vineyard, help the poor and make her family's clothes and much more. She speaks wisdom and is not idle. Consequently, because of the high praise she receives the saying was born "A woman's place is in the home." Women, who by choice or circumstance, (this includes widows), who are not married have suffered from stress, first because they were not married and secondly, because they were forced to work to support themselves. These women were discriminated against and were only allowed to work in home or home related occupations. Although she still possessed the qualifications to be the helpmeet, she was an intruder in a "man's world." God did not give talents to be hidden or buried. They were to be used to show his glory. In the story of the ten talents we are all familiar with, Jesus makes this point quite forcefully.

St. Luke Ch:10:38-42 tells how Jesus defended Mary who was sitting at his feet listening to his word. Mary's sister Martha was bustling about serving the company. She was frustrated and needed help. Martha appeared to Jesus to send Mary to help her. Jesus said (paraphrase) "Martha you are troubled about many things, but Mary has chosen the one that is needed." This emphasized several things. Martha's home duties were stressful and Mary would have suffered stress if she had been sent to help Martha. It is plain to me that Jesus meant that there was more to life than one phase.

Slowly, down through the years and up to this time, changing attitudes have allowed women to enter into almost any field. Women of talent, conviction and persistence have endured insults and discrimination because they were convinced they should be allowed to use the talents God gave them, not in competition with men but in sharing for the good of all.

In conclusion, I'm certain that women have been able to handle stress in order to bring God's word to fulfillment. Even though we may not believe or be consciously aware of the working of God within us, God chooses those that he will use. So as it was his original design for women to use all of his good gifts he has allowed them to prevail, however stressful the struggle was. In the final analysis, a woman's place is wherever help is needed.

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Safety Watch

By Sandi Byrd

Home fires are a serious threat to your family's safety. Approximately 5,900 people die and over 200,000 are injured each year by fire in residences. Many home fire injuries and deaths are caused by smoke, not flames. A closer look gives an important clue to a way that those frightening numbers can be reduced. Many deaths and injuries occur in fires that happen at night, while the victims are asleep. A reliable way to awaken these sleepers before the smoke becomes unbreathable dense would help more people escape uninjured.

Do I Need a Smoke Detector in My House?

If you're not certain, maybe you share some of the misconceptions that many people have which lead to underestimating the danger of death from nighttime fires. For example:
"The smell of smoke would wake me." It might, if acrid-smelling smoke were the only thing produced by a household fire. Unfortunately, many home fires smolder slowly for hours before they burst into open flames. And while this smoldering combustion is taking place, large quantities of toxic gases, including carbon monoxide, are produced. Carbon monoxide is the same odorless, tasteless and colorless gas that causes death when people breathe automobile exhausts in a closed garage or because of a leak in a car's muffler. If you're awake, you may feel a headache and dizziness, possibly some nausea. If you're asleep when the gas enters your room, you probably will never wake.

"There's plenty of time to escape." Possibly, if you're awake and if you have time to round up the family, and if none of them inhaled too much smoke or carbon monoxide before you woke up. The spread of toxic gases long before flames become visible and noisy may not give you enough time.

"Fire only happens to other people." This is probably the most dangerous idea of all. And it's probably just what all those "other people" thought before their fire occurred.

One more thing: the law is getting into the act in favor of smoke detectors. Detectors are already required in mobile homes, and many states and municipalities have enacted statutes that require them in new and existing homes and apartments.

Well, Just How Effective Are They?

They won't prevent fires, they won't protect your property (especially if you're not home), and they won't put the fire out for you. But they will increase your chances of getting up, and calling the Fire Department.

How Can We Help Our Smoke Detector Protect Us?

There's more to surviving a home fire than waking up before it's too lake. Just awakened people, including children, are often confused, and may panic in the excitement. The safety of all may depend on knowing instinctively what to do.

Plan and Practice For a Safe Escape.

Home fire drills may sound silly, and a serious fire is no fun to talk about, but a little time spent selecting escape routes and practicing what to do if the detector goes off may save lives if fire occurs in your home.

1. Get to know EDITH: Exit Drills In The Home.

2. Walk through the main escape route several times. Try it in the dark or with eyes closed. Memorize the number of steps between obstacles or turns. If a piece of furniture keeps getting in the way, move it to clear the path.

3. Plan alternate ways of escape from each room. If the main route were blocked by fire or impenetrable smoke, how would each family member get out? If bedroom windows are too high for safe jumping, perhaps you should buy rope or chain escape ladders to keep at a window in each bedroom.

4. If you must go through a smoke-filled area, crawl on hands and knees, with your head low, to avoid breathing smoke.

5. Before opening an inside door, touch the knob and the top of the door. If either feels hot, don't open the door. Fire on the other side might flash into your room. Use a secondary escape route.

6. Agree on a place to meet outside the home, so you can count noses and be sure everyone is safe. Do not reenter the home, not even for pets.

7. Don't call the Fire Department from the burning home. Get out safely, than telephone from a neighbor's home or use an alarm box.

8. Go back into the house or apartment only after the firefighters have assured you that the fire is fully extinguished and the structure is sound.

Your smoke detector is one of the most significant improvements in home fire safety ever to occur.
but its effectiveness depends on your own efforts to prevent and to escape fires.

MUSIC INTEREST

By Jesse Livingston

If anyone were to look at my music collection they would have a hard time understanding what type of music I prefer. One reason is that as I was growing up, my sister and I would chip in to buy one album, most of which she still has. Another reason is because of budget constraints. I would rationalize buying certain albums, promising myself I would buy the other next time, which of course never happened. Years passed with me filling in the gaps of my collection with wishes until one day I walked into a used record store. Until that point I had pictured them as being similar to used clothing stores, very dusty, strange smelling with the feel of mildew in the air. In some ways they were similar (bargains). In most ways they were not at all alike. I stayed in that store for about 1 1/2 hours looking through stacks, reading album covers and trying to decide which ones to purchase. The album covers were decent, the albums themselves had been cleaned or treated. Many were alphabetized, all were categorized. I consider myself both a music lover and collector. I love going to concerts, trading information about artists and collecting albums and music paraphernalia. These stores can add to a collection and service the needs of the music lover. The prices are lowered because albums are usually second hand, but sometimes you can find new albums mixed in with the used ones, usually also sold at reduced rates. Most used record stores will also buy records from customers and other merchants. There is no need to assume that your favorite artist's newest release is not there. Take a look, it very possibly could be. They keep current material right with the vintage albums. Because of increasing popularity and demand for compact discs and cassette tapes, these are bought and sold. The next time you hear that oldie you never had a chance to pick up, or that top 40 song you've grown to like, check out your local used record store. Some of my favorite haunts in Chicago are: Dr. Wax; 1312 E. 53rd St., and 2529 N. Clark; 2nd Hand Tunes; 2550 N. Clark and 1375 E. 53rd St., (also located in Oak Park and Evanston, Illinois); The ALS Foundation; Lou Gehrig Disease Mammoth Music Record Sale; in Willmette, Illinois at Edens Plaza an annual fall event.

POSITIVE MINDS POSITIVE IMAGES

WOMEN'S MYSTERIES

The Women's Mysteries Training Program is one-year journey into the intuitive and healing arts, for women who are ready to go deeper within themselves. It is based on the belief that women can gain access to their own inner knowledge, and create a framework on which that knowledge can be brought out into the world to change it in a beneficial way. By creating a community of women of all ages, colors, backgrounds and persuasions, and by showing each women ways of healing the creative part of herself, the training helps them to express their full potential in every facet of their lives.

Women's Mysteries comes out of the philosophy and life experience of Ione, who has led workshops in creativity for fifteen years. In 1988 Ione organized a group of 22 women of diverse ages and backgrounds, who together explored concepts of community. They "descended" to deep feeling levels, then "ascended" to allow their intuitive selves to function with greater ease in the practical world. At the end of the program-year thirteen initiates journeyed to Egypt, further strengthening their bonds of community.

This year, IONE has expanded the program to include three artist-healers prominent in different fields: Pauline Oliveros, Linda Montano and Melchia Crowne. They will be joined by six guest performers and presenters: Donna Black, Laura Donnelly, Robbie McCauley, Carolee Schneemann, Patricia Williams and Julie Winter. Each of these accomplished women will share her personal techniques to help lead women to healing and renewal.

For more information call (914) 339-5776, (212) 619-5726, or write to Women's Mysteries, 156 Hunter Street, Kingston, N, Y. 12401.

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A LESBIAN PARADISE

1990 UPCOMING EVENTS

January 14 - Sunday
Literary Exchange
Wimmin of Color Book discussion of all
Literary works by Zora Neale Hurston
Time 5 - 7 p.m.
Place: 8004 S. Phillips
$3.00 Non-members

January 30 - Tuesday
Films
"International Sweethearts of Rhythm" and "Tiny and Ruby Hell Divin' Women"
Time: 7:15 p.m.
Place: Women & Children First
1967 N. Halsted
For further information - 440-8824

February 9 - Friday
Literary Exchange sponsors
Black Herstory Celebration!
"Conversation Among Sisters"
Time 7:30 p.m.
Place: Women & Children First
1967 N. Halsted

February 21 - Wednesday
"Maya Angelou"
Time: 7:00 p.m.
Place: Circle Center, University of Illinois, Illinois Room
Ticket Price - $12.00
Tickets available at Women & Children First

February 23 - Friday
Poetry Reading
By Sharefe Locke, Geanne Towns, Lorraine Harrell
Time: 7:30 p.m.
Place: Women & Children First
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March 10 - Saturday
Literary Exchange/LLENA, Chgo. Women in Trades/ Women United for a Better Chicago sponsors an International Women's Day Dance "Sisters Celebrate"
Time: 7:00 - 12:00 p.m.
Place: 37 S. Ashland UE Hall
Tickets: $10.00 in advance
$12.00 at door
Dancing with D.J. Sheron Webb, Buffet, Entertainment
Cash Bar and limited parking
Tickets available from members of each organization, Women & Children First and People Like Us Bookstores

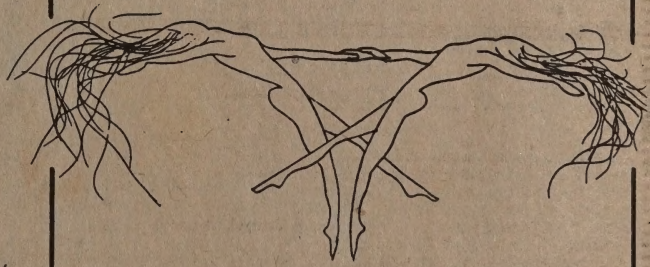
March 24 - Saturday
"SunWimmin- Drumming, Movement and Poetry
Margaret Davis, Rhonda Kendall, Yaounde Olu, Donna Weems, Sheila Venson
Time: 7:00 p.m.
Place: Kinheart, 2214 Ridge, Evanston, Illinois

Meet us at the Dock

Sunday, July 1, 1990
8 - Sharp
Til - 12 p.m.

L.E. Cruise

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY DANCE



SISTERS CELEBRATE AROUND THE WORLD

DATE: March 10, 1990
TIME: 7:00 - 12:00 p.m.
PLACE: UE Hall - 37 S. Ashland (Madison & Ashland)
TICKETS: $10.00 in advance
$12.00 at the door

Dancing with D.J. Sheron Webb, Buffet, Entertainment Cash Bar and Limited parking!

Tickets are available from members of each organization, Women & Children First and People Like Us Bookstores

A fundraising event sponsored by Chicago Women in Trades, Literary Exchange, LLENA (Latina Lesbians En Nuestro Ambiente) and Women United for a Better Chicago.

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WOMEN & CHILDREN FIRST

MOUNTAIN MOVING COFFEEHOUSE
for Womyn and Children

Schedule of Events - January/February 1990

Mountain Moving Coffeehouse is located at 1655 West School Street, Chicago. 769-6899 or 973-2477 for information. Performance is one show with two sets (approximately 8:30 & 9:45 pm) unless otherwise noted; doors open at 7:30 pm. The space is drug and alcohol free, with no smoking in performance area. Admission is always a suggested donation - more if you can, less if you can't - and no woman is ever turned away while space is still available. Front row seats for all shows reserved for the hearing impaired and differently abled. No male children over age 10 allowed. To be on the MMCH mailing list, sign up at the coffeehouse or write to Mountain Moving Coffeehouse, 5008 North Sheridan Road, P.O. Box 409159, Chicago, Illinois 60640.

Saturday, January 6th and January 13th: **CLOSED** for winter holidays...

Saturday, January 20th: **DIANA DEWEY** Well, she's back, after a too long absence from MMCH, for a great evening of music. Here's a singer with a great voice who does women's, folk, and her own music. If you've caught some of her recent local appearances, you know her talent. If not, join us and hear for yourself this exciting performer. Rediscover Diana Dewey's magic.

Saturday, January 27th: **DIANA LAFFEY** We're pleased to welcome back this impressive Chicago singer/songwriter. Diana's powerful vocals combine with her sweet accompaniment on guitar and piano to produce music that is strong and dazzling. She will be performing her own new material, as well as seducing her audience with some classic covers. Come in from the cold and warm up to this talented local light.

Saturday, February 3rd: **CRŪZ DEVON** Crūz Devon is a bright and powerful performer interweaving new world politics with deep-hearted folk-based melodies. Her lyrics ring clearly of the emotional throes that encompass us all, as well as hint at the deep spiritual journey we all must travel. Her cassettes, *Vices* and *Crūz* will be on sale.

Saturday, February 10th: **LESBIAN DESIRE AS SOCIAL ACTION** Nett Hart will speak and read excerpts from her book, *Spirited Lesbians*, a view of social action, away from being in the world, that begins in our lesbian identity. As those who take the bold move to love wimmin, we lesbians understand the process that overturns the misogyny that is stagnating justice and natural balance. Nett is co-author of the Almanacs of Lesbian Lore and Vision and co-founder of Word Weavers.

Saturday, February 17th: **WOMEN OF ALL SEXES** This marks the 1st appearance of Chicago's own "Women Of All Sexes" at the Coffeehouse. They have played to enthusiastic crowds at Suzie B's, the Gay Pride Rally, the Roxy and the National Women in the Trades Conference. "Women Of All Sexes" is a four-piece band who blend rock, blues, jazz and funk in their original songs. If you haven't already seen this exciting band in action, now is the time - come dance your winter blues away!

Saturday, February 24th: **BALLROOM DANCING** Remember those old Fred and Ginger movies - the flowing gown... the crisp tux... the way they'd swirl across the dance floor? Come - step with us into the future for an evening of fun and fantasy. Even if you've never danced before, Ballroom Dance Instructors Cheri and Ronnie will have you moving around the dance floor in no time.

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